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AIM-9X Block II completes back-to-back live fires

NAVAL AIR SYSTEMS COMMAND, PATUXENT RIVER, Md. –The Navy recently completed two successful live fire test missions on the AIM-9X Block II Sidewinder missile at Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division in China Lake, Calif.

A team from Air Test and Evaluation Squadron (VX) 31 conducted back-to-back developmental tests Aug.31 and Sept.1 to demonstrate Block II's ability to deliver expanded air-to-air warfare capabilities.

"I am very pleased both missions achieved all test objectives," said Capt. John Martins, Air-to Air Missile Systems program manager (PMA-259). "The team has accumulated an impressive record with nine successful live fire events in nine attempts. These tests verify the weapon's maturity as we prepare for entry into operational test."

During both missions, an F/A-18 aircraft fired one telemetry-equipped missile against a BQM-74 sub-scale target. The test events relied on AIM-9X Block II's multiple enhancements including: improved lock-on-after-launch; extended range lofting fly-out profile; two way data link; and improved all weather laser fusing against small targets.

The first mission tested the weapon's ability to fire against an extremely small target flying at low altitudes over the California desert at an extended beyond visual range. The second mission demonstrated Block II's all-weather capability when the test pilot, flying below the 1,000 feet marine layer of clouds off the Point Mugu, Calif. coast, shot at a target flying above the clouds.

Day two's test also incorporated the first use of GPS-enabled AN/DKT-89-3 Airborne Telemetry Equipment, enabling highly-accurate, high-rate, three dimensional time, space and position information to be collected during missile fly-out. Designed and built by the government team in China Lake, the AN-DKT-89-3 provides unprecedented real-time and post-flight data accuracy and is an extraordinary improvement in telemetry capability.

"In the past, it was extremely difficult to estimate how close the missile passed by the target," Martins said. "This enhancement allows us to better quantify missile characteristics and endgame performance against the target."

AIM-9X Block II, the newest variant of the venerable Sidewinder missile family, greatly improves the performance capabilities of the AIM-9X to counter advanced air-to-air threats. Recently approved for low rate initial production, AIM-9X Block II is scheduled to enter operational test in spring 2012.